



James Cochrane—known as Jim—is born on June 9, 1918, in North York, Ontario.

His father, James Alexander Cochrane, and his mother, Isabella Cochrane (née Henderson), are both of Scottish descent.

Jim has three sisters and one brother.

The family attends the United Church, and English is the language spoken at home.

After elementary school, Jim attends Western Technical High School for three years. He also takes an evening course in interior design.

He starts working at the age of 15, he wants to become a furniture maker like his father. Jim is subject to the N.R.M.A. (conscription) and is called up for service in March 1942.

In 1940, Prime Minister King introduced the National Resources Mobilization Act (NRMA). This act required the national registration of all eligible men for home defense and empowered the government to call up "any man in Canada for military training for the defense of Canada." The NRMA also granted the federal government powers regarding conscription and exemption, though strictly for domestic defense. Soldiers engaged in home defense under the NRMA were dubbed "Zombies"—a reference to the living dead in Hollywood horror films. The term reflected contempt for those unwilling to fight overseas.

It should be noted that French-speaking Canadians were staunch opponents of the NRMA; in the province of Quebec, for instance, nearly three-quarters of the population had voted against it.

Jim is not exactly eager to join the military. He wants to further develop his skills as a furniture maker; he later tells his instructors during an interview.

He waits until he is called up before registering, then heads to the regional N.R.M.A. depot in Toronto.

There, he first undergoes a medical examination. Standard details are recorded: Height: 5'9"; weighed: 153 lbs; eyes: blue; hair: brown.

A scar on the tip of his left middle finger is noted as a specific physical characteristic. Such details are recorded to aid in potential identification.

Jim then reports that he has been working as an independent furniture maker for ten years. He has no particular hobbies, though he is interested in sports—especially ice hockey, baseball, and lacrosse.

One unusual detail stands out: he spent several years raising piglets.

After the depot, Jim heads to basic infantry training in Newmarket, Ontario.

Although he isn't keen on the idea of the army, he decides in late May 1942 to sign up for active service with the Canadian Army.

He is assigned to the Queen's York Rangers and stationed at Camp Borden, Ontario.

In June 1942, Jim is transferred; Fort Chippewa Barracks in North Bay, Ontario, his next posting.

It is a somewhat unusual destination, as the barracks are known at the time as an 'Educational Basic Training Centre'.

In addition to military skills, a form of 'schooling' is also provided there.

This facility, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel T.W. Greenfield, played a unique role in 1941 and 1942. It served as a primary basic training center focused on fundamental education and literacy for recruits. Many young men who volunteered for the Canadian Army had received little to no formal schooling.

They were sent to Fort Chippewa not only for military drills but also to acquire basic reading and writing skills. The philosophy of Commander Greenfield—a World War I veteran—was:

"If you expect to receive letters, you must first learn to write them yourself."

That contact with the outside world through correspondence was invaluable, he explained—recalling times during his own career when he had gone without letters because the mailman had let him down too many times in a row.

Jim's skills are evidently up to the task, as his promotions come in quick succession. By September 1942, he holds the rank of Lance-Sergeant. Army assignments could be peculiar, however; he is also qualified as a 'Carpenter, Class I, Group B'—hardly surprising, given that he has spent ten years working as an independent furniture maker.

In October, he qualifies for his driver's license for wheeled motor vehicles, and his records list him as a 'Bricklayer, Group B'.

Jim enjoys leave during the first half of December and is also off duty over the 1942–1943 New Year period. He receives a positive evaluation; his eagerness to learn and his stability are praised, and he proves to be an excellent rifleman.

Notably, his records describe his aptitude as 'phenomenal learning ability'.

His superiors see him as a future officer—a remarkable prospect for someone who, as a conscript, had initially almost needed to be 'dragged in'.

In February 1943, Jim is sent to a leadership course at Camp Farnham, Quebec. He passes the course and is permitted to proceed to the cadet-lieutenant training. He successfully completes this in May 1943 and is granted the rank of Acting Second Lieutenant.

Jim's next step in his officer training is at the Small Arms Training Centre in Long Branch, Ontario, where he also completes the instructor course.

He is moved around frequently: to Vernon, British Columbia, for combat drills; to Debert, Nova Scotia, for follow-up training; and to Aldershot, Nova Scotia

His training concludes, and he officially is to be a Second Lieutenant in January 1943 before returning to Debert.

One final course—on leadership—awaits him, after which he will be ready for active service with the troops.

Meanwhile, negotiations have been underway at the government level since late 1943 to allow Canadian officers to serve in the British Army.

Jim has already indicated his willingness to go to the United Kingdom as an officer and to be attached to a British unit.

CANLOAN Officers

In the autumn of 1943, the British Army faced a severe shortage of infantry lieutenants and captains—ranks associated with roles such as platoon or company commander.

These infantry officers operate on the front lines during combat.

The British Army had already been fighting on multiple fronts for several years, and casualties in these roles were high. With the planned invasion on the horizon, this threatened to become a major problem.

Canada had a surplus of these young officers, who were motivated and willing to join the fight.

After extensive consultation between Britain and Canada, the green light was given in February 1944 for the following scheme:

- A maximum of 1,450 infantry officers and 50 logistics officers could be seconded.
- Participation was strictly voluntary.
- Pay was provided by Canada according to Canadian standards.
- Age limits: 33 years for lieutenants, 37 years for captains.
- British promotion rules would apply.
- Officers could be recalled by Canada if necessary.
- The initiative was codenamed CANLOAN.

High numbers of applications were expected in Canada, as many officers believed that participating in combat would lead to faster promotion. Others were so determined to see active service that they accepted a reduction in rank to qualify.

Nevertheless, the number of applications fell short of initial estimates.

Ultimately, 623 infantry officers and 50 logistics officers were selected.

They were assigned a service number beginning with "CDN," followed by a sequential number based on the order of their application. The dedication and performance of the CANLOAN officers were beyond question.

The list of decorations and promotions is long.

Their commitment and courage also had a dark side.

The toll: 128 killed, 310 wounded, 27 taken prisoner, and one missing.

Eleven of the fallen are buried in Holten. Their headstones can be identified by the maple leaf, the service number beginning with CDN, the inscription 'Royal Canadian Infantry Corps', and the British regiment to which they were attached.

Jim has already volunteered to serve with a British unit; he is selected and his personal CANLOAN number is: CDN/409.

He is transferred to Sussex, where the group receives further instruction.

On May 3, 1944, Jim and a group of fellow officers board the *Empress of Scotland*. The ship transports them to the UK, they arrive in Liverpool on May 11.

Upon their arrival in the UK, there is a vigorous recruitment drive for airborne troops. Nearly 100 CANLOAN officers went on to serve with the 1st and 6th Airborne Divisions. Some of them have no idea where they would end up.

A colleague of Jim, Lieutenant Anstey (CDN/478), later recounted how it happened:

"During the briefing, a British officer asked: 'Who wants to serve with the 2nd Battalion of the Oxfordshire & Buckinghamshire Light Infantry?' (2 OX & Bucks)

My hand went up—not because I was volunteering, but because Jim Cochrane had firmly grabbed my wrist and raised both our hands.

Before we knew it, we were on our way to Bulford, Wiltshire—the training camp for airborne troops."

After Jim's crossing to the UK, his service record offers little information. In June 1944, during training, Jim sprains his ankle and was out of action for a few days.

Reports from the 2nd Battalion, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry shed some light on the situation.

They are not deployed during the D-Day airborne landings, but they are deployed in August 1944.

The battalion—Jim included—is deployed on the eastern flank of the Normandy bridgehead.

They do not directly participate in the encirclement of Falaise.

By early September 1944, they are back in the UK.

During the August deployment, Jim is awarded the Military Cross (MC).

The citation reads:

'On 18 August 1944, he led his platoon through an enemy minefield to eliminate snipers who were slowing the advance.

On 25 August 1944, he led his platoon with such determination that enemy troops occupying the bridge over the Rorelle River were thrown into complete disarray.

This action prevented a counter-attack.'



The other occasion on which Jim and his men are deployed is during the Battle of the Bulge, the last major German offensive. They arrive in Belgium on 23 December 1944 and travel by truck to the battle zone.

Reports state:

'In early January 1945, the battalion took part in the fierce Allied counter-offensive to drive the Germans out of captured territory. Elements of the 2 OX & Bucks (specifically "C" Company) provided crucial reinforcements to the 13th Parachute Battalion, enabling them to secure the hotly contested village of Bure after nearly three days of heavy fighting.'

Jim appears to have come through these actions without major issues as well; his service record contains no notes suggesting otherwise.

The third deployment of the 2nd Battalion, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry is fatal for Jim.

The unit is deployed for the airborne landings between Hamminkeln and Rees in Germany as part of Operation Varsity—the Allied operation to cross the Rhine.

At 10.11 AM, march 24, 1945 the first British gliders began their descent on landing zones "O", "R" and "U", all situated in the immediate vicinity of the village of Hamminkeln.



Crashed glider

Along the river Issel near Hamminkeln, units of the British 6th Airborne Brigade were to take and secure several bridges in coup-de-main attacks. Soon after, British gliders with support troops, vehicles, guns and supplies landed on LZ "P", west of Hamminkeln. The gliders were received by heavy enemy fire on all landing zones. There were crashes, some caught fire, many were damaged or destroyed when landing.

As the glider carrying Jim approaches the landing zone, it is hit by anti-aircraft fire and crashes in flames. Jim and the others tragically lose their lives.

The standard Airspeed Horsa glider is used by the British 6th Airborne Division. It is the primary workhorse for the 6th Airlanding Brigade. While its maximum capacity was 28 troops, a standard operational load for an infantry platoon section was typically 20 to 25 men to accommodate heavy combat gear, ammunition, and specialized equipment. In addition to a crew of 2 pilots.

Jim is given a temporary grave beside the railway line near the Hamminkeln station. On 12 August 1946, his final resting place became the CWGC Canadian War Cemetery in Holten: Plot 4, Row H, Grave 2.

*In addition to the Military Cross, he is awarded:
The 1939-1945 Star; the France-Germany Star; the Defence Medal; the War Medal 1939-1945; and the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with Clasp.*

His headstone reads:
**Deep in our hearts
He liveth yet
We loved him too dearly
to ever forget.
Family**



Sources:
www.cwgc.org; www.ancestry.com; www.canada.ca/library-archives; wikipedia,
wartimesproject.com; codeword CANLOAN ISBN 1-55002-167-2